



The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

● AUGUST 1993

FOCUS ON

THE SYNOD YOUTH CONFERENCE



PROCESSED

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AUGUST 1993

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25 Years Ago!

Mr. David Athisayanathan of Voorheese College, Vellore, organised the first students' Holiday Evangelistic Camp for Students. Donations were collected by six groups of students. There were 23 students, 6 catechists and a few leaders. During our stay we visited eight villages. We went out to preach both in the morning and evening; slides were shown at nights. The young men showed keen interest in singing, distribution of tracts and sale of Gospel portions. Besides preaching we had Bible Classes and special talks. During-leisure hours the campers went out for swimming and played volleyball. The students enjoyed the Camp very much and are looking forward eagerly for the next one.

— Henry Lazarus

—Churchman 1957

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The Youth, The Neglected force of the Church



After a lapse of six years, the long awaited Youth Conference at the Synod level was held at Vijayawada in May. The entrancing young men and women turned the Bishop's compound a hub of activity! The Young were vivacious, agile and energetic and to spend three days with them was indeed a refreshing experience.

Seeing their potentialities and amicability and the way they had organised themselves and behaved, I developed a feeling that church is not bothering to tap such a great resource for its mission. I began to wonder why such a force, if I may say so, is not being utilized in any form in our churches. Of course, once in a year churches invite the youth to read the Bible on a Sunday and allow them to collect offertories and call it a day. It is the dullest, morbid and the most unimaginative way of making use of the force, the youth. They deserve better treatment than that. They are part and parcel of the church and should be allowed to grow with the church and somehow should be encouraged to get themselves involved in the mission of the church. But, instead, what I see is a dichotomy of old and young which is not a healthy sign of a growing church. The youth should not be retrograded and kept at the receiving end. Unfortunately a feeling has been created in the minds of the youth that they are not wanted in churches and have no partnership in the mission of the Church. This spells doom for the church. The future of the Church is tied down with the youth.

Often our elders teach the youth not to take part in politics and social life. Instead of preparing the youth to face the catastrophic evils of the society and adopt

themselves to live as the compatriots, the elders, wittingly or unwittingly, counsel the youth to get truncated from the main stream of the life—they are neither here nor there. On the other hand Church should take initiative and organise seminars for the youth to get abreast of the things that are happening in our country specially in the political, economic and social spheres of life. Meetings with the experts could be arranged which would facilitate the youth to develop skills to analyse the situations and play their role. Many political parties and even some of the religious organisations thrive on the strength of the youth and always place them in the frontline. If the Church wants to combat with the evil forces and fight for justice, its force is the youth. It is unthinkable to enter the arena without the Youth. Of course, we have to equip them with the armory mentioned by St. Paul in his letter to Ephesians 6, 13-18. Our fighters should be carved out to be the soldiers of love and peace and communicate that God's grace is stronger than the transgressions of human beings.

Mission of the Church demands the participation of the youth. Elders and the managers of the Church must have grace to invite the youth as the co-workers to accomplish the mission of God. Otherwise they are left frustrated, being unsatisfied with stale dogmatism, empty ritualism and the rigid hierarchy of the Church. It is imperative to activate the hitherto neglected force—the youth—and commit them in the transforming process to envision that new society and new humanity where exploiter and oppressor will cease to exist, and thus, take part in creating a new society by the power of the Holy Spirit.

—DASS BABU

The Synod Youth Conference

held at VIJAYAWADA from 14 to 16 May 93

Theme : 'GOOD NEWS TO ALL CREATION'

MR. STANLEY VEDAMANICKAM, *Convener, Synod Youth Board.*

Braving the scorching sun of May and not caring for the mercury level which was shooting up to 44°C at Vijayawada, the youth numbering about 200 representing almost all the dioceses, gathered at the Bishop Azariah Girls High School compound for a long-awaited youth Conference.

Thanks to the untiring efforts of Rt. Rev. Dr. K. J. Samuel, the Chairman of the Board, for making it possible and successful. We are fortunate to have such a moderator and the other officers who disposed favourably towards the activities of the youth and released funds to organise the Conference at the Synod level, which somehow could not be organised for the last six or eight years. The Moderator, Most Rev. Dr. Vasant P. Dandin, with his spouse, Mrs. Thabita, and the General Secretary, Prof. George Koshy, graced the occasion inspite of their busy schedules. The presence of the three Synod Directors, Rev. P. C. Dass Babu, Rev. Dr. Arun Gopal and Rev. G. Dyvasirvadam was most welcome. Bishop T. B. D. Prakasa Rao, Mr. K. G. Shekhar and Rev. G. Rajaratnam were responsible for all the arrangements.

The Moderator in his inaugural address stressed on the point of being in a position to confess Jesus Christ in public and live upto the expectations of the Lord by showing his qualities through the true Christian life. Jesus is the Revealer, Redeemer and Ruler of the entire mankind. This is the Good News that the Youth should aim to pass on to the people around.

Prof. George Koshy, the General Secretary, gave the key-note address on the theme. What does it mean to proclaim Good News in our time? He raised this question and explained at length the relevance and the meaning of the Good News. Preaching the Gospel, as it is believed that it was brought by St. Thomas as early as in the first century, people in that region did not bother to preach the Gospel in other regions. Only the missionaries who came to India a couple of centuries ago preached the

Gospel to all people. Youth should have this missionary zeal and emulate such qualities from dedicated persons like Mother Teresa, Bishop Desmond Tutu so as to derive inspiration to carry on the mission of the Church which in today's context involves social justice issues, Professor Koshy said.

There were six main addresses given by the Directors; Mr. Krupaveni Prakasa Rao, Mr. Thomas Samuel, Quiet Corner, and Bishop Prakasa Rao. All the papers were aimed to extol the youth to lead an exemplary life with a perfect vision for the future acquiring the communication skill to meet the demands of the time.

Bishop K. J. Samuel being a Charismatic leader insisted upon spiritual life and asked the youth to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Campfire coupled with several cultural items organised by Mrs. Soumini and Rev. Dass Babu was truly entertaining. There was an opportunity for the youth to exhibit their talents. The members were divided into six groups and discussed the four questions supplied by the leaders. The reports of the groups showed how serious the youth were in tackling the issues raised in the questions, certain methods, ways and means in for serving the mission of the Church. Thanks to the group leaders and the reporters.

Food was excellent, staying was comfortable and all the three days simply flew off making the conference most memorable. Thanks to Bishop Prakasa Rao and the team who looked after the youth. Our special thanks to the chairman, Bishop K.J. Samuel, who in fact was instrumental in converting the dream of holding the conference a reality. Our thanks are due to the Officers of the Synod, specially the Moderator and the General Secretary for participating in the conference and to all the Bishops of the dioceses for sending the youth delegates. Praise the Lord for such a successful conference.

Confessing Jesus Christ

MOST REV. DR. VASANT P. DANDIN.
[MODERATOR'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS].

"But Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ" (Mark 8,29).

Before I say anything about the text I have chosen let me say how happy I am to associate myself with this youth conference. After a lapse of a few years we are having again the Youth Conference. All credit goes to Bishop K.J. Samuel, the Chairman of the Synod Youth Board to conceive this idea and organise it as memorable as this. As you are aware it is not an easy job to get the Youth from all the dioceses gathered at a place like this. I whole-heartedly congratulate Bishop K.J. Samuel and Mr. Stanley (Tirunelveli) the Convener, for this achievement. I thank Bishop T.B.D. Prakasarao and his team, specially Mr. K. G. Sheaker, the secretary and Rev. G. Rajaratnam, the treasure and all the other local leaders for all these arrangements made to organise the Conference here at Vijaywada. It is good to have Prof. George Koshy, the General Secretary and three Directors of the Departments who will be delivering the addressess. I am indeed delighted to see you all dear young friends and greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us turn to the text. It was a simple question by Jesus posed to his disciples. It may sometimes do us good to know what people say of us. Jesus asked them not that he might be informed but that they might observe it themselves and inform one another. The account the disciples gave him was the high opinion the people had of him. They were convinced by his miracles that he was an extraordinary person sent from some unknown place. Some said that he was John the Baptist, others Elias, others, one of the prophets. All agreed that he was one risen from the dead. That was the opinion of the public. Jesus shifts his position. He wants to know what his disciples think of him; what will they say if someone asks them about him. He points his question, straight one, to his disciples : But who do you say I am ? Mass opinion often tends to be too general and it might even differ from group to group. What is desired is an individual confession, not mere opinion. It is not the public opinion

that is wanted, it is our public confession that accounts. You are the Christ, was the answer given by Peter. Yes, Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah who was promised and long-expected. Peter's answer was an assertion beyond any doubt. But what follows next was something that would have bothered the disciples: "He charged them to tell no one about him". (v.30). This, as it appears, contradicts the duty of disciple. Master should allow, in fact, encourage his disciples or followers to speak about him and his teachings thus spread his fame far and wide. Contrary to the normal expectations, Jesus is asking his disciples not to tell anyone—strict order to keep it secret. This is because the disciples did not have enough experience of Jesus. Sheer knowledge of Jesus is not enough to preach the 'Good News to all creation', as our theme goes. One needs personal experience, an intimate and the closest association. Unless and until one has been ignited by the power of the Holy Spirit he or she should not venture out. Peter was not permitted to speak out until he received the power. When he received the power, he was bold enough and with a clear vision he could boldly assert :

"Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2,36).

This statement borne out of personal experience brought home the message. Jesus is the revealer, prophet; the redeemer, messiah and the ruler, Christ and the Lord.

My dear brothers and sisters, Peter's experience should be our experience. This is the time for us to examine our Christian life. Do we firmly believe that Jesus came into this world to save the sinners ? Do we believe that he suffered and died on the Cross for our sake? Do we believe in his Resurrection and Ascension and in His Second Coming? Do we believe in his teachings ? Who do you say that I am — is being constantly asked by our Lord Jesus Christ. Our belief is grounded in that question. Finally when we receive the power of the Holy Spirit He will empower us to confess that Jesus is the Saviour, not only our Saviour but the Saviour of the

whole world. This is the Good News we have to propagate. Jesus is the revealer — he revealed God to us; he is the redeemer — he redeemed us from the bondage of sin and he is the ruler — he rules our lives in his eternal Kingdom. This is the Good News to the Whole Creation which we have to communicate. St. Paul puts it in a very picturesque manner :

"...the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the

Children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail... not only the creation but we ourselves... for the redemption of our bodies..." (Romans 8, 21 ff).

The long-awaited liberation is possible only through Jesus Christ. Here is yet another opportunity for you, the youth, who have come from almost all the dioceses of our Church to rededicate yourselves to God the Holy Spirit. Commit yourselves to the task of passing on the good news to the whole creation. God bless you all. I wish you all a happy time. Enjoy your conference.

O God, Our father,

Help us to be

Cheerful when things go wrong;
Persevering when things are difficult;
Serene when things are irritating.

Enable us to be

Helpful to those in difficulties;
Kind to those in need;
Sympathetic to those whose hearts are sore and sad.

Grant that

Nothing may make us lose our temper;
Nothing may take away our joy;
Nothing may ruffle our peace;
Nothing may make us bitter towards anyone.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Teach us, good Lord, to serve thee as thou desire;

To give and not to count the cost;
To fight and not to heed the wounds;
To toil and not to seek for rest;
To labour and not to ask for my reward
Save that of knowing that we do thy will.
Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Open my eyes that I may see,

Incline my heart that I may desire,
Order my steps that I may follow
The way of thy commandments.
In the name of our Lord
Jesus Christ. Amen.

Good News to all Creation

Prof. GEORGE KOSHY, *General Secretary*

(The keynote address delivered at the CSI Youth Conference in Vijayawada)

Good News to all Creation — this was the theme of the last Synod. The last decade of this century has been declared by many churches in the world as the Decade of Evangelism. The Anglican Church has done it, the Roman Catholic Church has done it and many more churches have declared so; therefore this is a very relevant topic. What does it mean to proclaim the Good News in our time? Proclamation of the Gospel is the most important and the primary task of the church. At the end of Mark's Gospel we get Jesus Christ's commission to His disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. There are several translations of this verse; one of the translations says "proclaim the Good News to all creation."

The Lambeth Conference which is the meeting of all the Anglican Bishops in the world, to which the CSI Bishops are also invited, because we are members of the Anglican Communion, has given four different aspects of the mission of the Church.

To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God. This Gospel has been preached during the last 2000 years. It came to our country in the first century itself. We in Kerala believe, or we the Christians in India generally believe, that one of the disciples came to India though there is no historical evidence to prove that Thomas came to India. Whether he came or not, the fact is that the Christian Church has been in existence in India from 52 A.D. But unfortunately Christians did not bother to preach the Gospel in the other parts of the country. It is only after the coming of the missionaries from the West that the rest of India got the gospel. The 19th Century was called the Missionary era, the century of evangelizing. The 20th Century is called the century of Ecumenism and probably the last decade of this century must be a period of re-evangelisation, because many people have run away from the Church. The Church has grown in our country and in other countries in spite of persecution. During the socialist regime in Eastern Europe and Russia, the Church did not have freedom to preach but they were still alive under persecution. Now they have come out evangelising their country. In our own country the Gospel has had a tremendous effect. The Christian impact on India has been out of proportion to our population. Consider the number of institutions, colleges, schools and hospitals through

which the Christian Church has been communicating the Gospel. We are living in a pluralistic situation where there are different religions in this country which we have to respect but I am afraid the present freedom that we have got to preach the Gospel may not last forever. Fear has been expressed in several circles that secularism might disappear in India. So what happens if we are not allowed to preach the Gospel?

This brings me to my next point. It is our duty to preach the Gospel not only through proclaiming the word of God but through our life and actions. My second point is that to proclaim the gospel means to respond to human need by sharing our resources with others. St. Paul in his Epistles asks some churches in some places to collect money to be given to the needy churches elsewhere. So, this idea of sharing, and helping others, is part of the gospel. So the history of Christian mission is the history of service to the people through relief work or responding to human needs, responding to diseases, responding to natural disasters etc. As a matter of fact, several organisations like the Red Cross received inspiration from this original idea of the mission of the Church. As young people, I want to tell you that you must be able to find meaning in your life through service to your fellow human beings. Please remember, when you get a job, to share something out of your income for helping the needy people. One of the problems in modern life is meaninglessness in life. We do not know what we are living for. There are several people in the developed countries who commit suicide because they find no meaning in their life. Bertrand Russell one of the great philosophers of this century has written a book, "The Impact of Science on Society." Russell was an atheist. In the last chapter of the book, "Science and Values" he discusses the problems of the modern man. One of the problems of the modern man in spite of all his achievements is meaninglessness. People have what is called Death wish. They have no desire to live because life looks meaningless. Bertrand Russell says, that the only solution to this meaninglessness is Christian compassion. Loving your neighbours as yourself is what he means by Christian compassion.

Thirdly, to proclaim the good news means to try to transform unjust structures of society. Some Christians would ask "Is this the mission of the Church?" According to St. Paul the mission of the church is to fulfil God's purpose in creation. If so, the Church should be interested

in all human activities. And it is the duty of the Church to seek to create a just society. Christian love can be practised in society only by helping in the creation of a society based on justice.

What is the Biblical basis for this search for justice in society ? The Bible does not teach that poverty is a good thing. Of course voluntary sacrifice of the pleasures of the world and suffering for the sake of the Lord are in different category. The Bible does not teach that material comforts are bad in themselves. This is why Archbishop William Temple said that Christianity is the most 'materialistic' of all religions. God has promised not only peace of mind and salvation of soul but abundant life which includes freedom from poverty, freedom from disease and freedom from oppression.

As the church grew, a social philosophy developed. This was influenced by the prophets and their teachings. Moses gave the law that all alienated land should revert to the original owner in the year of the jubilee. The basis of this was the belief that all land belonged to God. The prophets spoke out against rich men who accumulated wealth and neglected their duty to the poor. All these laws were not probably fully enforced but they remain remarkable documents of the search for justice. The experiment of the early Christians, of selling everything and distributing the proceeds among themselves was a failure, but it was an attempt at the social and economic expression of the Christian faith. The letters of St. James are also important documents on social justice.

Later, however, the church lost its witness by identifying itself with the rich and the powerful during the days of feudalism and later capitalism. During the industrial Revolution in Europe the Church did not support

the struggle of the poor workers for justice. This was why the Trade Unions became largely atheistic. In the modern world there is a growing realisation that the church should be with the poor in their struggle for justice.

Social justice can be brought about only through political action. The church cannot directly do this, but it has a responsibility to equip its members to participate in the building of a just society. It must proclaim and teach the values of the Kingdom, values of freedom, justice, equality etc. The Bible does not give us a blueprint for any particular kind of society. But I believe that what we must strive for is a society where there is the highest possible combination of individual freedom and social justice.

Finally, proclaiming the good news to all creation also means striving to safeguard the integrity of creation. We are living at a time when man can destroy the whole earth with nuclear weapons. The way we carry on industrialisation can lead, in a short time, to the depletion of most of the natural resources on earth. The atmosphere of the earth can become so polluted that the earth will become uninhabitable. These are dangerous possibilities we face. Why should the church be involved in this problem ? If we believe that this earth was created by God for us and for our children we must be concerned about protecting this planet. To help to sustain the atmosphere of this earth and to renew the life of this earth is part of the mission of church. Cooperation in the movement for nuclear disarmament, encouraging a simpler life-style, reforestation, making people eco-conscious—all these are areas in which we must make our contribution, so that this earth will continue to be the good earth God created for us and for the coming generations.

This is the holistic mission of the church. This is the Good News to all creation that Jesus has commissioned us to proclaim.

1. New Secy. For NCCI Programme Unit V (Youth)

Mr. Moses P. Manohar (35) has joined the Staff of the NCCI Programme Unit V (Youth) from 1st July, 1993. Mr. Moses P. Manohar is married to W. Vimala Irene and they have one daughter, five years old. Mr. Manohar has done his B.D. from the Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, Madurai and M.A. (religion and Philosophy) from the M.K. University, Madurai. He has submitted his Ph.D. Thesis to the S.V. University, Andhra Pradesh. Before he joined the NCCI he was the programme Officer of the Inter-Church Service Association, Madras, one of the member bodies of the NCCI. Let me say that he was already with the family of the NCCI before joining the NCCI Staff.

2. CNI new General Secretary :

Dr. Vidyasagar Lal (55) M.Sc., Ph.D. has been appointed General Secretary of the Church of North India from May 1993. Dr. Lal was formerly the General Secretary of the Delhi YMCA.

3. Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church's new President :

Dr. M. Victor Paul has been elected the President of the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church, one of the biggest Lutheran Churches in India, in June 1993. Dr. Paul was formerly the Principal of the Andhra Christian Theological College, Secunderabad.

One Spirit... One Body

RT. REV. DR. K. J. SAMUEL *Chairman, The Youth Board*

"For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body..." I Corinthians 12, 13.

My dear young friends,

Let us thank God for this wonderful opportunity he has given to all of us to gather here and spend three days together, enjoying fellowship, listening to the addresses on the theme *Good News to all Creation*, taking part in discussions and above all to re-dedicate ourselves to the service of the Lord. I thank our Moderator Vasanth Dandin and the other officers of the Synod for their kind consideration in sanctioning the needed financial help without which this conference would not have been possible. Moderator with his wife and the General Secretary Prof. George Koshy made it possible to be here with us on the first day only shows their concern for the youth in the Church. Bishop T B D. Prakasha Rao, the local bishop, Mr. K.G. Shekar, the secretary of the diocese and Rev. G. Rajarathnam, the Treasure, have done their best to make this conference a memorable one. We thank all of them and the Bishops who sent you here; the directors who took active part in the conference and to you all for your response, I thank you. My special thanks to my friend Mr. Stanley, the convener of the Youth Board.

Although we come from different parts of South India with different cultures, different languages, food habits, even looking differently, we all are one in the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. You have equal status in the Body although young—this is what St. Paul speaks about. The one who does this unification is none other than the Holy Spirit. Today we need this power of the Holy Spirit for all of us to get knitted into the precious Body—the church. It is not a new thing — God had already promised the gift of the Spirit through the Prophets, specially through the prophet Joel (2, 28-32). There you see that the promise was for all, young and old; servants and the masters.

The Lord's promise was fulfilled at Pentecost. The prophecy of Joel had come true—the disciples spoke with strange tongues in an ecstasy of divine speech; there were signs of supernatural forces at work the mighty wind and fire. On this day the church was constituted as a reality in history and its growth began. Its life was marked by unity; common contributions of wealth, adherence to the apostolic teaching; the sacrament of the Bread Broken and

the increasing prayers. Worship at the temple in Jerusalem was also maintained and the outstanding mark of the new community was joy. This is the Good news not only to a tiny community which had existed nearly 2000 years ago, but to the whole creation—human beings and the rest of the creation. This experience of the Pentecost is very unique and this should not be confined only to a particular group. It has a universal appeal and 'promise' is for all—it could be to Peter, the Jew or it could be to Cornelius, the gentile.

It happened when they were all with one accord in one place. It was at Jerusalem. The prophecy was that from that place the Word of the Lord should go forth. Here God has promised to meet them and bless them. They were with one accord—they prayed together. They were thus prepared to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Here is a visible sign of the gift. They saw cloven tongues as of fire and they rested upon each of them. There was an outward sensible sign for the conforming of the faith of the disciples themselves. The sign given was fire. This fire sat upon them to denote the constant residence of the Holy Spirit with them.

What was the immediate effect of this? They were endued with miraculous power for the furtherance of the Gospel. It seems evident that not only the twelve disciples but all the followers who were with them were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to speak in other tongues. It was to prove that Christ could give authority to preach to the nations, he gives ability to preach to them in their own language.

St. Paul speaks about the spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12, 1-13). Where grace is given it is for the salvation of those who have it. Gifts are bestowed for the advantage and salvation of others. The Holy Spirit given as a gift should not be used for selfish things nor to be spoken of cheaply. On Pentecost a new community with new vision was born; being guided by the Holy Spirit, the community thrived upon sharing, caring, serving and praying. This is the new vision that Holy Spirit gives to us all even today. Let us pray for this. When you all go back to your respective dioceses carry this good news with you and in your turn pass on the good news to all—to the whole creation.

Good News to all Creation

REV. DR. ARUN GOPAL *Director, Christian Education*

(Sermon delivered during the C.S.I. Synod Youth Conference, Vijayawada)

My dear young people,

It is a joy to be with you at this Synod Youth Conference, held after many years in Vijayawada. At the very outset I should like to thank the organisers of this unique programme, specially Bishop K.J. Samuel, Chairman of the Youth Department for inviting me to address you all. Here you have many things to see, to learn and to share. But what we enjoy or celebrate most is your presence, the coming together of the youth of our great Church—the Church of South India.

Among many things offered to us here, we are given an opportunity to study and reflect on the Word of God, to know what God is calling us—calling young people to do. The text for our meditation during our stay here is Mark 16:15. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation". This is the command of the risen Lord Jesus Christ to the whole Church—entire company of disciples. Hence, it is for all people of God who constitute the Church. Do you know that you are included in that? On many occasions you would have heard people say that tomorrow is yours. I want to remind you my son, my daughter that today is yours. You have a key role to play in the Indian society and the Indian Church of today. Remember that you have a claim on your rightful place in God's work. Certainly you have a claim on God's promises too. For, we read in Joel 2:28&29 .. I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy..your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit."

When God calls you He equips you for the task entrusted to you. The disciples were ordinary people. Among them some were highly educated and others were not. Some were old and some were young. At the time of Christ's crucifixion we see their fears and anxieties. After Christ's resurrection on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon them they were completely transformed. They received a new energy, a new strength and a new courage to declare the gospel or the good news to the very people who crucified Jesus. It is the Spirit which gave them the required skills and abilities. And, they were willing to sacrifice everything, even their

lives for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is this experience that was promised in the prophesy of Joel. Into this experience that children, young people and adults are led in every generation in the history of the Church, and through baptism, confirmation, Lord's Supper, Church worship and other devotional exercises today.

My son, my daughter, do not for a moment think that preaching the gospel is the responsibility of the pastors, evangelists or others who are professionally trained for that purpose. It is the responsibility of every baptised Christian. Some of you have come from the Dornakal Diocese. Every year, as you know, many are added to the fellowship of the Church, from the Lambadi tribe. That has been going on since the time of the great Bishop V.S. Azariah. It is reported that after baptising every Lambadi man or woman, that person was required to take an oath laying his or her right hand upon his or her head stating, "owe unto me if I preach not the gospel".

Do you know that we have a gospel to preach? Many years ago Archbishop Donald Coggan while addressing a Christian gathering in Madras mentioned that there are four gospels in the Bible. But the world is waiting for the fifth gospel. That is "the gospel according to me and you". How true it is! The good news declared by our life-style in every human situation! It is easy to talk about what God has done in the lives of early apostles or martyrs or great preachers in the history of the Church, and even today among our friends or family members. But, what is your experience with the living Christ? Has he ever challenged you? Do you have an experience of having responded to his claims? If so, it is that story which matters most for the life and witness of our Church.

Yesterday our Moderator Dr. Dandin in his inaugural address based on Mark 8:29 .. who do you say that I am ?" stated emphatically that every Christian should be able to affirm—"Jesus Christ is my Saviour, he is my Lord, it is he who gives meaning and substance to my life". My son, my daughter, can you make such a statement and introduce Jesus Christ to others? You have ample opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ. Among your class-mates in school or college, among your family members at home and team-mates in the playfield or workspot, God has kept you to declare your experiences with the risen Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing

extraordinary in preaching the good news. You simply need to say how your story is related to the story of Jesus Christ. That is what the early Apostles did. For we read in I John 1:1 & 2 "That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life..."

More than ever, before people are in need of gospel today. For, the human society, nay the whole creation, is experiencing great pain and agony. Human greed and consumerism have made peace and justice rare commodities. The unrestrained enterprising spirit of women and men is causing harm to those people who are already victims of poverty and exploitation. You can see how sophisticated technology is throwing fishermen, agricultural labourers and others who depend on conventional and inexpensive means of livelihood out of their jobs. Large industries and factories now being located in villages and rural areas while providing employment opportunities, are also causing danger to people, cattle and plants through air and water pollution. In such a situation what is needed is not just a solution to these life and death problems. But a society where these problems will not exist. For that purpose the gospel or the good news holds a promise. Jesus Christ has inaugurated a new age with a new life-style with kingdom values.

Imagine how the world will be if every individual resembles Jesus Christ, who was a man for others. Forgiving

one another, caring for one another, sharing with one another! Of course, human selfishness and pride will not easily give way to such a life-style. That is why Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. But God raised him alive so that the risen Lord Jesus may continue to inspire us, guide us and direct us until the new heaven and the new earth might become a reality for the suffering people, nay the suffering creation.

My son, my daughter, would you like to make yourself available for the great task of proclaiming the good news to the whole creation? Let me conclude with a story. On a cold winter morning a poor man was playing his broken violin in a street corner in London. He was doing that for a long time but there was no response from anybody. All the doors and windows remained shut. Then came a man, took the violin and began to play. Then all the doors and windows opened one by one, for people wanted to know who that expert musician was. After a while he stopped playing and told the poor man to go and collect money at every door. Here we find that the same broken violin which could not produce melodious music in the hands of the poor man, did so when the expert musician took it into his hands. Likewise, our lives will not reflect the grace and the humility of Christ which are essential to proclaim the gospel, if they are self-centred. But, they will do so when we offer ourselves into God's hands with the prayer "I place my hands in your hands O! God, I am available to be shaped and used by you. May the good news which binds me with you, bind me with all people and the whole creation". Amen.

Rev. M. A. Thomas is no more...

Rev. M. A. Thomas, one of the best-known ecumenical leaders and human rights activists in India, died on 25 June.

A priest of the Mar Thoma Church, he was the founder of the Ecumenical Christian Centre (ECC) in Whitefield, near Bangalore, and its director till 1979. The ECC has hosted a large number of consultations and conferences—national, regional and international—on concerns of religion and society. Among its regular programmes is the Indian School of Ecumenical Theology, designed primarily for teachers of theology.

Concerned about human rights violations and sensing an erosion of democratic traditions, Thomas founded the Vigil India Movement after President Indira Gandhi's declaration of emergency in 1977. A secular movement, it developed a network of groups in many parts of India. Under his leadership it participated in struggles for justice and worked to build awareness of human rights issues.

Thomas served as president of the Indian section of Amnesty International and of the Association of Christian Institutions for Social Concern in Asia.

As a young man, he worked for the Inter-Religious Student Fellowship and, later, the Student Christian Movement. He summarized the life-long goal of his work in the title of a recently-published collection of his writings, "Towards Wider Ecumenism". [EPS]

Vision Towards Regeneration

REV. G. DYVASIRVADAM, *Director P.A.D*

'Where there is no vision, the people perish' Prov. 29.

Visions are not a new phenomenon in Eastern religions. Physical appearances have already been sought by the religious Gurus through which they claim distinction society. But the writer of the Proverbs speaks about 'VISIONS' which means more than a physical appearance. It is a programmatic reality leading towards a new creation of life. In this context I would like you to meditate on three visions which are recorded in the Scriptures.

I Ex. 3:1-6 (GREAT SIGHT) VISION TOWARDS LIBERATION

Moses, who fled from the Pharaoh for a simple reason of standing by the side of Justice in the midst of struggle for identity and liberation, was keeping the flock of his father-in-law on Mount Horeb. There he had a vision in which he saw an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame out of fire out of bush. The bush was blazing yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight...' 'That is where exactly Moses learns of the voice of the Lord commissioning him to take up a great responsibility to liberate the people whose voice of groaning was heard in the sight of God.

This great sight comes to Moses not for his selfish end but as a means of reconstruction of a new society. Moses takes this vision seriously and continues in his life with a dedication to liberate his people who are even God's people. Vision, call, commitment go together towards a regeneration to uphold the human values.

II Isaiah 6s 1-10 VISION TOWARDS Purification and regeneration

Now it is Isaiah who envisions the glory of God in whose presence he becomes conscious of his society's uncleanness the degraded values which touched the lowest ebb. God bestows him a new tongue, a new language towards purifying the people of Israel. One can understand the state of degeneration in Israel by the time Isaiah was called to God's mission. Is 1:21 ff 'How the faithful city has become a whore' She that was full of justice, righteousness lodged in her—but now murders! your princes (leaders) are...companions of thieves (dons) Everyone here bribes..

At a time of high degree of corruption and chaos, Isaiah was given such a vision of the portrayal of God of Holiness and awesomeness. Again the call is attached with that vision and the purification was the starting point which was only a symbolification for a real purification of the degenerated community.

III ACTS. 9:3-8 VISION TOWARDS NEW CREATION

Saul, a religious zealot, and learned young man, marching with fundamental fervour to put an end to faithful community. He was encountered with a vision vision to hear and see the resurrected Lord. This vision transformed the life of Saul to become Paul as a preacher and as a founder of the Church in Asia Minor.

What interests the reader of his life is that he affirms now that the Christian faith he hated once becomes experience of new creation (whoever is in Christ is a new creation). The vision that he received transformed him to build a new spiritual community. We have visionaries in our own land like Sadhu Sunder Singh who wished to proclaim the Gospel in every nook and corner of the land. Mother Teresa had a vision by which she sees Christ in every destitute.

Joel prophesies 2:28b 'Your young men shall see visions'—when his spirit is poured out on all flesh.

Vision in this context is not a superstitious appearance but a divine purpose towards a constructive reformation of the community. As youngsters and students we know how the colleges and Universities in India invited a culture of drugs, liquors and violence. One is surprised to see how some youth are running after extremism and terrorism to demonstrate bloodshed, looting and all other inhumanly degenerated values.

Vision in this context also means to see the beauty and integrity of nature. Of late, we have invented a culture of destruction. We have begun to cut off the trees, mine the water, break the mountains and pollute the atmosphere through the unplanned industrialisation. We miss to envision the beauty of greenery and the human relatedness to the creation of God.

A Christian family must nurture the child with Christian values imbibed from Jesus Christ. Family prayer, Christian education, appreciation of nature within the family are the starting points to avoid the degenerating elements from the mind of the children. Good news to all creation must begin from the experience of 'new creation' within a Christian family life. We need a vision within the family otherwise people, starting from our children the youth to all members in society at large, may perish — May we give us also a vision, a vision of Jesus Christ not only for our renewal but for the reconstruction of a new society an integrated society which is a Christ-centred society

By Grace Or By Faith

Dear Santosh,

In my last letter, you will remember, we raised the question why in the CSI we baptise children. You yourself told me that your pentecostal friend argued with you that there is no Biblical evidence for this practice. Not only pentecostals (Assemblies of God and others) even some of our own CSI members think adult baptism is more Biblical. Let us consider some of the issues involved.

First of all, it is true that in the N.T. times, most Jews and Gentiles who became Christians were adults. The condition on the human side to receive baptism is repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ. See Mk. 16:16 Acts 18:15, 31-34. Adult baptism is a Jewish custom which John the Baptist followed in the Jewish church of those days. Only male adults were allowed to be members; women and children were excluded.

Secondly, we find in the Bible, that many households were baptised. People became Christians as families. This was breaking the above-mentioned Jewish practice of allowing only male adults to belong to the synagogue. What a great spiritual revolution to understand that God in Jesus accepted us as families: So we find that Lydia and her family (Acts 16:14-15), Jailer and his household (Acts 16: 32-34), Crispus and family (Acts 18:8), Stephen and family (1 Cor 1:16), received baptism. While it is not explicitly stated that there were children in these families, the word used for household in Greek implies the high probability of children also being part of the household.

However, in the second generation of the Christian Church already, i.e., early in the second century A.D. when children were born to the first Christian converts, the question arose what should be done for them. Should they be baptised or not? The early church then started a new practice. Books like the Didache (Teaching of the Apostles) inform us that the early church started baptizing children from almost the end of the first century A.D. Also, as Jewish children were circumcised on the 8th day, Christian children began to be baptised on the 8th day. Paul taught them that physical circumcision was no more needed for salvation, only spiritual circumcision. What matters is a new being in Christ (Gal. 6:18).

You know that many practices in the early church changed according to the new situation. For example, the first Christians worshipped in houses or riverside; but as numbers grew, church buildings were built very soon. Paul had to appoint elders and bishops when the first apostles were dying out.

So, children began to be baptised in the new situation based on Biblical passages such as the following words of Peter's sermon :

"For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call"—(Acts 2:39)

Paul says that children of a believing father or mother are already holy (1 Cor.7:14). In fact he says, the faith of one member (husband or wife) makes the whole family acceptable to God. There was even the practice in Paul's time of receiving baptism on behalf of the dead (1 Cor. 15:29).

We also read that because of the faith of the daughter of Syrophenician woman, Jesus healed her daughter (Mk. 10: 24-30). Because of Jairas's faith Jesus raised his daughter from death. Mk. 5:22-43.

Because of the faith of the Centurian his servant was healed Lk. 7:2-20. The point is that not the faith of one person but that of the members of the family is accepted by God for the healing and salvation of the rest of the family.

We know that Jesus accepted children and blessed them (Mk.10:13-16). He even chastised the disciples for preventing children to come to Him—a passage that we read in baptism service. He said that only those who become like little children will inherit God's Kingdom (Lk.18:17, Mt.18:1-4).

All the mainline churches like CSI, CNI, Methodists, Lutheran, Mar Thoma, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, practice child baptism. Our mother churches, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches, in England and the U.S.A. practised and continue to practice child baptism. Only in the last century when Pentecostalism arose and earlier by a sect called Ana-baptists, it was insisted that only those who are adults, i.e. above 14 years of age, and confess Jesus Christ as Lord should be baptised. In the CSI, if the parents are not Christians, we practice adult baptism. We also allow adult baptism for any one who desires so to be baptised, according to available facilities and subject to the willingness of the Presbyter.

Those who do not practise child baptism argue

- i) This is not Biblical
- ii) Children have no faith, or are not capable of faith. They do not understand the meaning of baptism.

- i) The Bible is open in this matter (families were baptised as seen above).
- ii) Parents' faith (and the congregation's) is effective
- iii) Being children they need not have the experience of repentance, for Christ has already accepted them.
- iv) We all grow in understanding the significance of baptism only gradually; Even the adults do not grasp its meaning fully.
- v) Wherever child baptism is practised there is adult confirmation. Both are a single act separated by time (I shall write more on this later).

The fundamental issue here is theological rather than Biblical. Are we saved by *our faith* or by *God's grace*? There are verses that emphasise one or the other. In such cases, we can only ask, which has priority over the other? Faith or grace?

The Bible is clear that God loved us before we loved Him, even when we are sinners (Rom 5:8) Christ accepted children into God's Kingdom by His gracious love. (10:14)

Eph. 2:5 makes it clear that we are saved by *grace through faith*. This means what is prior is God's grace and not our faith. This does not mean faith and repentance are unimportant; only that even these are superceded by grace.

We can say that those who practice child baptism are '*grace Christians*' and those who insist on adult baptisms are '*faith Christians*'. God accepts us as disciples by His grace even when our faith is small and inadequate: God accepts us in His grace by the faith of our parents and the faith of the church.

What do you think? To which group would you like to belong? Think on these things and let me know and you respond.

Theologically yours
Sam Amirthan
Bishop

PS. I trust you yourself were baptised as a child



Continued from page 13

and practise humility—not to be arrogant. And Blessed are those that thirst after justice and righteousness and Blessed are the merciful for they shall earn mercy.

Blessed are the meek in the sense one must not be a coward but believe in the goodness of God and friendliness of the universe. Blessed are the pure in Heart for they shall see God and Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God. With these assurances he healed the sick and comforted the suffering.

At the same time he did not promise them security against any misfortunes of the world. He had no guarantee for pain, loss, grief or disgrace. All that He offered was a state of mental well-being by being preparing in him a will to obey the will of God by which a man could remain tranquil with a zest for life. He knew that acceptance of God's will with total faith can work wonders in one's life.

Those who had faith in Him witnessed miracles in their own lives. To cite an incident in a place called Capernaum, a woman was suffering from a disease. Since many years no physician could heal her when Jesus came followed by a big crowd to that place, she said to herself: 'If I can only touch His garment, I will be healed' and

she did so and she was completely cured immediately. Jesus demanded, who touched me? The crowd around Him along with His disciples were amused at his question because in all that jamming crowd almost all were touching Him. But Jesus silenced their amusement declaring that some energy had been drawn out of Him and His power was called upon to cure and He knew everything. At that moment He said it, the woman fell at His feet acknowledging that it was she and then Jesus said to her "Daughter your faith has healed you, go in peace".

Jesus stressed on faith and repentance and forgiveness. Even when He was tortured on the cross, He prayed saying "Father forgive them for they know not what they do". It speaks of His marvellous Love. He really professed what he preached and became immortal as the son of God in the history of mankind.

His voice still echoes in every believer's ear and we look upon Him with reverence, repentance with faith and fondness, with guilt and gratitude to seek His grace and peace. To ask, to seek knock at His portal is our desire but to bestow His Blessing on us is His will. With Hope we adore and await.

Jesus the Great Master

MRS. USHA JOSEPH, *Dharwad*

The voice that echoed in the land of Galilee 2000 years ago was that of Jesus of Nazareth, the Great Master and Messaiah. Jesus is the name that dawns Hope in every Believer's heart. His life itself was a message and His death a fulfilment and His Resurrection a Supreme Spiritual attainment. The message of Resurrection of Christ not only renews one's faith but also reassures the love of God.

The sacrifice of this spotlessly clean and sinless man was not solely to fulfil the word of God but also to turn every sinner towards God Almighty. His silence at the time of great Betrayal and at the time of His trial and crucifixion spoke of the greatest ideals He cherished and illustrated to the world that He professed what he actually preached. Any attempt to visualise his great ideologies from a religious dimension reduces one to be a dogmatist. What is needed is neither a bigotry nor a discord towards the Principles pronounced by christianity as an institution but true pragmatism to imbibe the real spirit of what Jesus preached in the land of Galilee.

This great Master and Messiah showed his utmost humility by washing the feet of his own disciples, and his subtle message to carry one's own cross as He did, shows forth how he humbled himself and reached immeasurable heights of greatness and excellency. Can we show forth such excellencies of Him in our mundane life?

What did he preach? what was so capturing in His message? what impressed a common man? These are some of the questions that arise in the minds of all those who do not know or those who know less of Him.

What exactly he wanted is very simple. His golden rule was that a man must do unto others what he expects from others to do for him. This golden rule is both logically and psychologically convincing. When one expects all good things from others with basic urge for Love and concern one should be able to reciprocate the same finer feelings. It does not involve any extra-ordinary effort to show goodness but the very feeling of placing oneself in other's position psychologically prompts one to be good.

Jesus came to fulfil the old law breathing into it a new meaning of magnanimity. The old law said Love thy friends but Jesus said love thy enemies. Can we love our enemies? Is it humanly possible? Are we expected to have

a caressing affection for our enemy? Naturally the answer is "NO". Then what does he mean? He only meant not to hate the enemy and not to curse him but to forgive him and leave his fate to God. His idea was to put an end to human fury i.e., not to repay an injury with injury because hatred breeds hatred but peace ushers in when force is not answered by force. His Love for fellowmen and His merciful ideas were really shocking and sounded radical to the people because the Mosaic Law of eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth ruled the minds of the people.

Jesus as a social reformer gave a call to humanity to put an end to all racial discrimination. He said love thy neighbour as thyself. But the question arises as to who is the neighbour? Whether a Jew or a Gentile, do not discriminate He declared. In this regard he gave the parable of a good samaritan.

A samaritan was discarded as a low caste person and was never treated on par with others especially by Jews. As per the parable a Jewish merchant was attacked by thieves when he was travelling. The two Jews who passed that way did not help him but a samaritan who was passing that way came to his rescue and saved him and comforted him and reached him to a safe place. This samaritan proved to be a good neighbour. Then why hate him on caste considerations? He condemned all sorts of discriminations and preached tolerance.

Jesus told His disciples to be gracious in offering their service to others. He said if somebody takes away your coat give him your vest as well. Keeping in view the oppressive law of the land, he said, if somebody compels you to walk with him carrying his luggage for a mile, go with him another mile willingly without any expectations. How great are His ideas of selfless service! He preached this new and astonishing wholly Christian doctrine of the law of surplus service. A true Christian is expected to serve society with this concept of service in his mind.

Jesus laid down certain laws that govern life and pleaded to practise it for the welfare of the human well-being. This makes life more livable and lovable. This is known as the sermon on the mount.

He said that Blessed are the pure in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. He meant one must be gentle

Continued on page 12

Karnataka Northern Diocese

PARTNERSHIP IN OBEDIENCE

I had an opportunity to visit Germany along with eleven others from my Diocese, Karnataka Northern Diocese, Dharwad for a period of three weeks during May and June 1993. Our's was a mixed delegation consisting of four clergy, four laymen and four women representing four Area Councils of the Diocese. The purpose of our visit was to get to know the life of the Churches in Germany, in particular the EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF KURHESSEN WALDECK and share our experiences with the people.

During our visit, we had been given an opportunity to preach in the churches and address in the Youth meetings, Kindergarten Schools, Old Age Homes and to the different communities. It was a great experience for all of us to take part in the 25th German KIRCHENTAG which was held from 9th to 13th June '93 at Munich. About 4000 overseas visitors participated in this great festival. The theme of the festival was "Accept one another" based on the Biblical text Romans 15th Chapter. I was impressed to see three thousand Choir members and Five thousand trumpet players singing together along with the 150,000 participants on the closing day praising the Risen Lord at the Munich Olympic stadium.

We also had the privilege of participating in the Partnership Consultation at the Academy of the Evangelical Church of Kurhessen Waldeck, Hofgeismar from 1st - 4th June '93. The representatives from partner Churches of South Africa, Namibia, Tanzania, Indonesia and Ethiopia too participated. 'Partnership in Obedience' was the theme of the conference and eminent scholars presented papers on 'Germany after Unification', 'Environment issues' and 'Integrity of Creation' and so on. The Rev. J. Prabhakara Rao of Dharwad and Rev. Tumisang Moleela of South Africa were asked to conduct the Bible studies on Psalm 104 and I Corinthians respectively during the conference. There was a time for reflection and to share experiences with each other.

We thank all our partner church districts of Bad-Hersfeld, Melsungen, Yeswege and Fritzeler of EKKW, KASSEL for their love and concern towards the younger churches of South Africa and India. We thank our Bishop Most Rev. V. P. Dandin for making all the arrangements for our visits to Germany.

Rev. J. Prabhakara Rao

Members of the Team

- | | |
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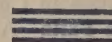
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